

EXHIBIT 8
DATE 2-12-13
HB 420

Re: Food and Agricultural Development Network Funding Request

Our business is a small bakery located in Bridger, MT which makes artisan pastries and breads utilizing as many local ingredients as possible. We have been in business four years now and have seen our business grow each year.

We would like to offer our support of the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Network's need for continued funding.

Our business has worked closely with the Food and Ag Development Center at Beartooth RC&D. The Montana Food and Ag Development Centers have been an integral provider of resources to our area in the delivery of technical assistance and resources to developing businesses. We believe the Food and Agriculture Center Network program should be one that has long-term sustainability.

Specifically the Beartooth Food and Ag Center has helped our business by assisting us with the writing of a USDA Rural Development grant for a marketing plan and for the development of a logo, website and business signage. We have also found it difficult to keep pace with state food and safety updates and regulations due to there being no established website or central location for getting Health and Human Safety questions answered accurately and in a timely manner. Currently the process of calling the state DPHHS office for Howard Reid or our county sanitarian is a slow process due in part to both of their workloads not allowing for acceptable access to them for up to date information.

We wish to stay in compliance with state food and safety regulations but believe a lack of centralized communication network makes it difficult to do. The food and safety guidelines adopted by the federal government are difficult to even find for small food businesses.

The time consuming research to find the adequate information also causes financial burden to small businesses. Until we are in compliance we are unable to market our products thus causing a loss in sales as well as an incapability to grow and expand our businesses.

We would like to see a process by which when county sanitarians certify food businesses they collect a fee and present the business with the food and safety guidelines in hard copy or through a website that simplifies through categories so the regulations have less subjectivity. We would like to see someday a state and federally compliant database for certified food businesses to keep track of changes in their products contents information as it changes etc that could also send out emails when there are changes that affect them.

Sincerely,

Tim and Debra Zimbelman

Das Kuchenhaus Bakery

Bridger, MT 5901